

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040750

GENEVA FOR US HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION

FOLLOWING REPEAT NAIROBI 2146 SENT ACTION SECSTATE BONN GENEVA USUN
FEB 09.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 2146

GENEVA FOR US HUMAN RIGHTS DELEGATION

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, AS, US

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR'S IMPRESSION OF UGANDA

1. HUGH DUNN, AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN NAIROBI, JUST
RETURNED FROM PRESENTING HIS LETTER OF CREDENCE TO AMIN.
FOLLOWING IS SUBSTANCE OF INFORMATION GIVEN US BY THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER.

-- KAMPALA IS CLEAN, OUTWARDLY PEACEABLE CITY, WHERE THERE
ARE NO SIGNS OF UNREST OR OVERT REPRESSION.

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-- CONSENSUS OF RESIDENT AMBASSADORS AND OTHER NON-UGANDANS
WITH WHOM DUNN SPOKE WAS THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO LARGE-SCALE
KILLINGS OR OTHER MASS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR PAST
6-8 MONTHS. AMIN SAYS HE HAS EMBARKED ON CAMPAIGN OF BROTHER-
HOOD AND RECONCILIATION, AND FACTS TO DATE SUPPORT CLAIM. NO
ONE, HOWEVER, IS CONFIDENT THAT SOME INTERNAL OR FOREIGN

INCIDENT MIGHT NOT AGAIN SET AMIN OFF ON NEW BURST OF SAVAGE REPRESSION.

-- DESPITE SLIGHTLY IMPROVED CONSUMER GOODS SITUATION, UGANDAN ECONOMY IS STILL VERY MUCH IN DOLDRUMS. LACK OF INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE IN STABILITY OF COUNTRY AND FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY OF EXPATRIATES DISCOURAGES FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR UGANDAN GOVERNMENT TO RECRUIT EXPATRIATE EXPERTS OR TO GET QUALIFIED UGANDANS, NOW IN EXILE, TO RETURN HOME. DUNN WAS TOLD AT ONE HOSPITAL THAT NINE-TENTHS OF DOCTORS PRESENT IN UGANDA WHEN AMIN TOOK OVER ARE NOW GONE. TECHNICAL PERSONNEL AT ALL LEVELS ARE IN VERY SHORT SUPPLY, AND THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF IMPROVEMENT IN SITUATION IN SIGHT.

-- DUNN WAS TOLD BY SEVERAL OFFICIAL CONTACTS, INCLUDING PERMANENT SECRETARY IN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, THAT UGANDANS FEEL MOST UNCOMFORTABLE IN THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND WANT VERY MUCH TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, BOTH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC, WITH WEST.

-- WHEN DUNN MENTIONED HIS COUNTRY'S INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS, SEVERAL OF HIS UGANDAN INTERLOCUTORS SUGGESTED HE MAKE THIS POINT WITH AMIN. DUNN WAS, HOWEVER, UNDER INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO RAISE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WITH PRESIDENT BUT WILL PROPOSE TO HIS GOVERNMENT THAT HE BE AUTHORIZED TO DO SO ON NEXT VISIT.
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-- UGANDAN FOREIGN MINISTRY IS RECEIVING NEWS OF US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS ON UGANDA AND EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT ADMINISTRATION IS OPPOSING FURTHER SANCTIONS.

-- DUNN CONFIRMED IMPRESSIONS OF OTHER VISITORS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN THAT THE ARMY APPEARS FIRMLY IN CHARGE IN UGANDA, AND LOCAL RESIDENTS, BOTH DIPLOMATIC AND OTHER, FEEL THAT ARMY RULE WOULD CONTINUE, WITH NO CHANGE FOR BETTER, IN AMIN WERE REMOVED FROM THE SCENE THROUGH NATURAL CAUSES OR VIOLENT MEANS.

-- ALL WITH WHOM DUNN SPOKE CONCURRED THAT SOVIETS ARE KEEPING A VERY LOW PROFILE AT PRESENT AND SEEM NO MORE AT EASE WITH AMIN'S MERCURIAL TEMPERMENT THAN ANYONE ELSE.

-- DURING PRESENTATION CEREMONY, AMIN DID NOT DISPLAY EFFUSIVE FRIENDLINESS, AS HE IS SAID AT TIMZS TO DO, AND SEEMED A BIT DISINTERESTED. HE GAVE DUNN IMPRESSION OF BEING GROSSLY OVERWEIGHT, OUT OF SHAPE, AND SLIGHTLY STUPID.

-- DUNN WAS APPROACHED BY SEVERAL RESIDENT AMERICANS, WHO

HAD NO PARTICULAR BUSINESS WITH HIM, BUT WHO SEEMED COMFORTED TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO VISITING WESTERN DIPLOMAT.

2. COMMENT: AUSTRALIA HAS LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE BUSINESS WITH UGANDA. THERE ARE THREE OR FOUR RESIDENT AUSTRALIANS IN COUNTRY, AND ONLY AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE IS SMALL NUMBER TRAINING GRANTS. DUNN SAYS HE INTENDS VISIT UGANDA (OR SEND EMBASSY OFFICER) ABOUT ONCE EVERY SIX MONTHS.

3. PICTURE OF UGANDA--DULL BUT NOT DESPERATE--PORTRAYED BY DUNN IS CONSISTENT WITH REPORTS WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM OTHER TRAVELERS DURING PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE LOOKS STATIC, AND THER IS APPARENTLY SOME CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM THAT IT MAY REMAIN SO. ALTHOUGH AMIN HAS
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SUFFICIENT FOREIGN EXCHANGE FROM COFFEE SALES, DOMESTIC ECONOMIC SCENE IS BLEAK, AND PROSPECTS ARE THAT IT WILL GET WORSE, SINCE NO SOURCE OF BADLY NEEDED TRAINED PERSONNEL IS IN SIGHT. THUS, DOWNWARD TREND IN PROVISION ESSENTIAL GOODS AND SERVICES CAN BE EXPECTED CONTINUE.

4. WHILE NO ONE SEEMS HAVE CLEAR NOTIONS OF WHERE PROCESS WILL ULTIMATELY END, DUNN SAID HE DID HEAR INTERESTING RUMOR FROM MORE THAN ONE SOURCE TO THE EFFECT THAT THE SOVIETS WERE WORKING WITH UGANDAN EXILE GROUPS WITH HOPE OF USING THEM TO OVERTHROW AMIN SOME DAY AND INSTALL MORE RELIABLE LEADER, WITH WHOM SOVIET UNION COULD DO BUSINESS ON MORE RATIONAL BASIS.
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